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ABSTRACT

A study focusing on the constructions of organizational reality offered by eight faculty members in a school of education at a large midwestern university is presented. This qualitative study documented and analyzed tacit and/or explicit sensemaking strategies. The four parts of the study are as follows: (1) a tracing of the convergence of the ideas of organizing and inquiry (organizational theory, educational inquiry, integration of subject and methodology, and organizational culture and leadership); (2) a description of the methodology of the study, and an offering of some evidence of the thoughts which shaped it; (3) the final analyses of the data, and a brief explication of three hypotheses for consideration based upon the interpretations (e.g., faculty members within a school of education do not interpret experience the same way nor do they have the same experiences to interpret); and (4) a presentation of practical implications for the field of educational administration, information on organizational culture, the efficacy of naturalistic inquiry in a study of the context and processes or organizing, and a brief annotated bibliography. Tables are included. Contains 47 references. (SM)

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The Individual as Organization:

Sensemaking in a School of Education

Judith M. Meloy

Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, San Francisco, March 1989.

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The Individual as Organization:
Sensemaking in a School of Education

In the Spring of 1986, a qualitative study using a non-orthodox thesis of organization was undertaken. The purpose was to focus on the constructions of organizational reality offered by eight faculty members in a school of education at a large, midwestern university. Tacit and/or explicit sensemaking strategies were also documented and analyzed. Because of the non-orthodox approach to the subject of organizing and the subsequent conduct of a naturalistic inquiry, the paper is necessarily divided into four parts, each with its own purpose.

Part One traces the convergence of the ideas of organizing and inquiry, which enabled the focus of the study to be developed.

Part Two describes the methodology of the study in some detail, while continuing to offer some evidence of the thoughts which were shaping it.

Part Three highlights the final analyses of the data, i.e., my interpretations of a summative sense of the individual as organization as well as a brief explication of some of the sensemaking strategies evident in the constructions. Included in this section is a brief explication of three hypotheses for consideration based upon the interpretations.

Part Four:

- presents practical implications for the field of educational administration;
- addresses the topic of organizational culture;
- asserts the efficacy of naturalistic inquiry in a study of the context and processes of organizing;
- provides a brief, annotated bibliography, which directly and indirectly links to possibilities for future thinking and research on sensemaking.

PART ONE: GROUNDING THE STUDY

Two conceptual frameworks were important to this study of the sensemaking constructions of faculty members in a school of education. The frameworks reference contemporary and non-orthodox theories of organizing, and the shift from the preeminence of positivism to the increasing acceptance of post-positivist modes of inquiry.

Organizational Theory.

Organizations in general and educational organizations in specific have been objects of research and theorizing for more than fifty years. During the last decade, however, different theories of organizing have emerged, providing alternative lenses through which to view organizational activity. Examples of these lenses include the topics of organizational culture (Schein, 1985), individual expectation and subsequent sensemaking (Louis, 1980; Carroll, 1981); and the concept of organizing as patterns of relationships (Weick, 1979) or systems of interpretation (Daft & Weick, 1984). What differs is not the focus on the micro, or individual-organizational level. Classic efforts (Barnard, 1938; Argyris, 1957,1964; Presthus, 1962) brought attention to the role of the individual in the organization. The difference comes from within the micro level; the emphasis has switched from the explication of the individual's function, i.e., external role and behavior (the individual as a part of the organization) to the explication of the individual's and group functioning, including cognitive, relational and other meaning-making influences (the organization as a part of the individual). The current emphasis is on the "inputs" the individual inherently contributes to composite experiencing. Examples of this emphasis include such analogies as the individual as an information processor, the individual as an expression of cumulative experiencing, and/or the individual as an interpreter of symbols. Research and theorizing in these directions include attention to "artifacts and creations" (Schein, 1985), such as the explication of organizational rituals, myths and stories (Deal & Kennedy, 1982; Martin, 1982). Other efforts, including McGregor's 1960 classic The Human Side of Enterprise, deal with the invisible levels of beliefs and assumptions. Stated simply, organizations are being looked at and reinterpreted from the inside-out; that is, the human dimension of organizing is being explicated from psychological, semiotic and cultural perspectives.

Educational Inquiry.

The current directions in organizational theory are supported by similar shifts in the understandings of how research is to be accomplished. Generally acknowledged as a paradigm shift, from the preeminence of scientific methods and positivism to an increasing interest in qualitative methods and post-positivism, attention is focussing on the human being in context;

complexity is seen as a challenge not to be avoided; the topics of values and interpretation have become an explicit part of, not apart from, contemporary inquiry.

During the last ten years, much of the literature of educational inquiry has concerned itself with alternative methods of doing and paradigms for understanding. In the area of methods, qualitative approaches, with roots in anthropology and sociology, have become more common. In the area of paradigms, naturalistic inquiry, the feminist critique of scholarship and critical theory have established particular cases against the narrowness and rigidity of positivism. Because of the historical nature of these developments and their clear articulation elsewhere in the literature, only a few comments will be made to further focus the conceptual framework within which the study was undertaken.

The bulk of traditional organizational research has been done within the tenets of positivism. This mode of inquiry is grounded in the five basic assumptions located on the left side of Table 1 below. Lincoln & Guba (1985) offer an alternative set of assumptions, called axioms, which conflict with those of positivism and are located on the right side of Table 1. Within the set of alternative assumptions of inquiry, humane and context-rich research can be more easily imagined.

Table 1
Traditional and Alternative Assumptions of Inquiry (Meloy, 1986).

	Traditional Assumptions		Alternative Assumptions
1.	There is a single reality,	1.	There are multiple, constructed realities,
2.	which can be generalized	2.	which exist in a particular context
3.	and the causes of which can be determined;	3.	and are the result of many concurrent interactions.
4.	while the researcher maintains an objective stance,	4.	The researcher and the researched are connected necessarily,
5.	the inquiry itself is value-free.	5.	in an inquiry bound by values.

A naturalistic framework of inquiry enables the researcher: a) to conceptualize the organizational participant as a whole entity rather than as a set of discrete variables, such as age, gender, role, salary, experience; b) to approach a local setting without a rigid a priori framework, which in turn fosters flexibility of direction setting and decision making, and enhances the possibilities for exploration and learning from within that setting; c) to verify continuously participant understandings and researcher interpretations during the inquiry. A framework of assumptions, whether "positivist" or "naturalistic", provides the foundation for the subsequent integrity of the research process, from the decisions about what to study and how to study it, to preparations for clarity and rigor in the conduct of the research and fairness in the interpretation of results.

Integration of subject and methodology.

Alternative theorizing about organizations and alternative modes of inquiry provide new opportunities for thinking about organizations in general and educational organizations in specific. Organizational theorists and social psychologists have recognized some gaps in the contemporary knowledge base of organizations. They have asserted the need for alternative research designs in order to fill those gaps.

> Organizations exist in multi-dimensional and segmented environments...the problem of disparate perceptions of environmental and intra organization characteristics will have to be attended to more closely. (Aldrich, 1979, p.126)

> In order to make further progress toward a theory of organizational structure, it will be necessary both to consider many sets of interacting variables at the same time and also to broaden our consideration of time and space...in looking at many research reports one cannot help being aware of a sense of placelessness and timelessness. (Mansfeld, 1984, p.141, emphasis added.)

> Simply put, OB (organizational behavior) researchers have not sufficiently immersed themselves in the lives of organizations and their employees to really understand the richness and complexity of organizational events and relationships (Korman & Vredenburg, 1984, p, 237).

Institutions of higher education (IHEs) are a subset of organizations which have been examined from the assumptions of traditional organizational theory and science. Particular aspects of faculty members' lives have been studied, such as motivation, satisfaction, morale and autonomy; processes such as planning, goal setting and leading have been analyzed as well. Within the traditional assumptions of organizational theory, found on the left hand side of Table 2 below, there remains a focus on the externality, or outcomes, of organizing. The trouble with this framework is that it enables individuals to be treated atomistically, focusing upon aspects of the individual as a means of studying other organizational variables. The studies have failed to focus on the individual as a whole human being from whom much can be learned. Alternative assumptions of organizing, found on the right hand side of Table 2, emphasize the actions and processes of organizing.

Table 2
Traditional and Alternative Assumptions of Organizing (Meloy,86)

	Traditional Assumptions		Alternative Assumptions
1.	Organizations are goal-attaining entities	1.	Organizations are action dominated entities
2.	in which behavior is intendedly rational and	2.	in which individuals rationalize their behavior post facto
3.	directed by individual preferences.	3.	and discover their preferences through action.
4.	The processes of organizing are generalizable,	4.	The processes of organizing are context-bound,
5.	and the outcomes of organizing are predictable.	5.	and the outcomes of organization are uncertain.

The primary reference for thinking about sensemaking was Weick's (1979) Social Psychology of Organizing, in which sensemaking is defined as the reduction of equivocality. Some writers suggest that equivocality is reduced within "the security of a body of tacit assumptions about the way the world works" (Gifford, 1984, p.189). Schein (1985) argued for the primacy of attention to basic assumptions in his discussion of

Organizational Culture and Leadership. Other authors have described certain "automatic" sensemaking activities undertaken by individuals in their efforts to reduce equivocality (Ashforth & Fried, 1988; Carroll, 1981; Gioia, in Sims & Gioia, 1986; Gioia & Poole, 1984), a concept described by Langer (1979) as "mindlessness" organizational behavior. Whether individuals rely on assumptions or cognitive scripts, sense is made and living/working among others is simplified.

The second primary source of thought was Louis'(1980) study of newcomers to an organization, which focused attention on the times when sense is actively made, e.g., moments which surprise one or fail to meet expectations. The question remained, if sensemaking is the reduction of equivocality and if the individual, in a sense, creates/interprets the organization, by what means does an individual sort through the day to day to build, maintain and/or change his/her construction of reality? What are the scripts and the assumptions? The concepts of socialization and culture do not focus on sensemaking at this level. How individuals make sense of their workplace can be gotten at by focussing on individual constructions of reality.

Within the domain of non-orthodox organizational theory, the literature on sensemaking opened the door to new domains for thinking and research. In addition, the assumptions of naturalistic inquiry, as explicated in Table 1, conferred value on the context and complexity of human interaction. In combination, the evolution of the specific focus was becoming clear.

The Study.

My response to three additional resources enabled a focus of the study to emerge. The first two were a 1985 edition of Change magazine, devoted entirely to the professoriate, and a subsequent editorial reply. The third resource was a statement by Weick (1985). To each in turn.

"The Faculty: Deeply Troubled" was the title of the report from the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. As discussed in Change, the report employed the prevailing research tradition in terms of the selection of "variables" to be examined and the use of a closed-ended questionnaire to examine them. The report was based on questions reflecting an underlying set of assumptions about what the "professoriate" is and what is important to it. Deduced from the graphs, the questions included:

- Have you ever published a journal article, written or edited a book?
- Is department morale worse off/better now than 5 years ago?
- Would you become a teacher again?

- Are you more or less enthusiastic about your career?

- Do you feel trapped in your profession?

In response to these and other questions, the following percentages were reported: 39.9 percent said department morale is worse now; 21.3 percent said they would not become a teacher again; 38.1 percent thought they might leave the job in the next five years. The following quotation captures the tone of the report: "Not surprisingly, one-fifth of all faculty report that if they had it to do over again, they would not become college teachers" ("The Faculty", p. 32). What that percentage also reports, although it is not mentioned in the article, is that four-fifths of all faculty who responded probably would become college teachers again.*

The underlying assumptions of the Carnegie report were questioned by Sanford Pinsher, a member of "the faculty" responding in the "Point of View" section of The Chronicle of Higher Education, March 19, 1985.

> (the report)...gives me pause. Have I spent the greater part of my life in a "deeply troubled" profession without knowing it? Could I have been deluded?....It is downright uncomfortable, this feeling that my students are worth trying to teach, that my colleagues are deserving of respect, that our administrators are, on the whole, doing a good job. (p.128)

Pinsher's response highlighted the concepts of multiple constructions of reality and the interpretative nature of "science". The point from these two resources is that the picture presented by the Carnegie Foundation was framed by method and question, relying on the traditional literature and assumptions to provide the variables, form the questions and guide the interpretation of the results. The report may have come "out of the mouths" - or from the pens - of faculty members, but it did not originate from them.

The third resource was found in a paper written by Weick (1985), in which he suggested an alternative approach for the study of the professoriate.

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* NOTE: See Clark's (1988) The Academic Life for a reversal of this interpretation: "The 1984 Carnegie survey found that an overwhelming proportion of regular faculty were satisfied with their profession" p.217; an explanation of the dissatisfaction reported in the 1984 survey follows, pp. 220-232.]

> I think an argument can be made that an organization exists largely in the head of the individual. Precisely because of cognitive phenomena such as hindsight bias, organizations cohere within the minds of organizational actors, and cohere differently between people (Weick, 1985, p.8).

Weick's statement suggests that the organization explicated by traditional organizational theory and research (an external entity, an open system or a turbulent environment) is most likely a psychological concept finding "life" in the minds of organizational participants. If the organization exists in the head of organizational participants, would faculty members in a school of education be able to generate their own constructions? Would they vary from the average, as Pinsher's did? Would the organizational constructions share common assumptions and understandings? Would they provide commentary to suggest, for example, that <u>if</u> morale is worse than it was five years ago, then <u>why</u> that is so? Would those reasons be personal, professional or both? Would they be shared across colleagues? Would their sensemaking strategies, e.g., scripts, bodies of assumptions, expectations, be discernable or explicit? How could individual constructions of organization be collected without leading faculty members to some version of reality imagined by a researcher? These questions led to the consideration and selection of appropriate methods, addressed in the <u>Procedures</u> section below. One thing was certain, however; any attempt to collect individual constructions of reality would need to respect a fundamental desire to consider individual organizational participants as whole beings. Therefore, the constructions of organizational reality provided by individual faculty members could not be viewed/used as some "version" of a larger "truth", or as a bit of the "real" organization, the identity of which could then be externally negotiated. Further, any methods that were used would have to be reinterpreted within the concept of the individual as the whole organization. By concentrating on these givens, the narrowing of a focus had been achieved.

<u>The Focus.</u>

The purpose of the study was to document individual constructions of reality from faculty members in a school of education, with the hopes of portraying some examples of the negotiation, or sensemaking strategies, each used.

PART TWO: PROCEDURES

Data Source.

Eight faculty members from a school of education at a large, midwestern university were the data source for the study. During an initial interview with the dean to gain entry to the site, names of possible first round participants were solicited. The dean suggested the names of five persons based on the selection criteria I gave him: 1) that the potential respondent have, in the dean's opinion, a point of view about the school of education that was different than his own, and/or 2) that the potential respondent be knowledgeable about the school of education. From the five names received, selecting the first three names was a semi-spontaneous, "quantitative" exercise; I chose the first two individuals the dean suggested, because he asserted each had a perspective different from his own and different from each other. From the remaining three names, I chose the individual about whose area of professional interest I was the least familiar. Starting off on the right foot implied that I could not take the setting for granted, nor the people. I hoped that by placing myself in an explicit learning situation, I could sharpen my skills of "making the familiar strange". Two of the three respondents were male. None of the three worked in the same department.

During the third of four interviews with the first round respondents, I asked them for the names of other potential respondents and provided them with the same criteria offered the dean. I assumed the suggestion of an individual by two or more of the original respondents was an indication of still another distinct organizational construction. In all, eight faculty members agreed to participate in the study and five refused. Of the five, two were unwilling to discuss the possibility either face-to-face or over the phone.

> (Listening to the casual comments of secretaries and off-hand comments by several of the respondents about some of their colleagues, I came to believe the two who flatly refused were pushing tenure agendas. I checked in the catalogue to see when they had come to the university and their current status; the timing and their reported focused energy provided circumstantial evidence to support that hunch. Confirming evidence about one individual was volunteered during the course of a subsequent interview interaction with a respondent. In the second instance, I followed up on the remark of a secretary, who confirmed the hunch.)

Of the remaining three, one was concerned about anonymity and decided not to participate after the initial interview; one preferred not to take the time; the third was not available during my time frame.

Data Collection.

After the initial interview with each potential respondent, a series of interviews, lasting 1 1/2 - 2 hours each, were scheduled across the following three to four weeks for those who agreed to be a part of the study. (The agreement is found in Appendix A of the original study.) The maximum amount of interview interaction was 8 1/2 hours with one respondent; the least amount was 5 1/2 hours. Information from the remaining six respondents was collected during a minimum of 7 1/2 hours of interaction with each. Interviews were scheduled during the months of January through March, 1986. The boundaries and endpoints of the interviews were mutually determined as the respondents offered few new foci for examination and I ran out of probes.

Methodology

The Interview.

The primary method of data collection was the interview. Although logic seems to require that one know the questions in order to obtain the answers, the focus of the study required a different approach. Bougon (in Morgan, 1983) explicated the Self-Q technique, a method selected from among others because its premises were most compatible to the study. The Self-Q technique is an approach for "uncovering the subjective knowledge of another"; it is a method whereby the interviewer/researcher transfers "most of the initiating, steering, and validating problems to the interviewees" (p. 182). Interviewees are asked to generate questions they believe they should be asked. The interviewer/researcher then asks the respondents those questions. Because I was not interested so much in the "what" which might be important to the respondents than I was in the "how" importance was determined, I adapted Bougon's technique by generating one, open-ended question which seemed to provide as few evaluative frameworks as possible, while providing a sense of focus to the research. The question each respondent in the study was asked to address was, "How do you figure things out around here?"

> (Indeed, coming up with the question was not an easy task, but it was simpler by far than the initial interactions resulting from it; once each of us got started, however, the interaction became more focused. The confusion is suggested in the content of the final mini-case reports, located as Chapter II in the original study (Meloy, 1986). Although I don't believe I ever satisfied a single respondent by providing enough clues about "what I 'really' wanted", I am convinced - by the concurrent and subsequent analyses, conscious interactions with the theoretical frameworks and methodology, and the context and content of the researcher-respondent interactions - that I got exactly

what I wanted. For not knowing a priori what the study would look like, that is certainly high praise! Each respondent did well in living with the ambiguity inherent in the study.)

Data Analyses.

In a naturalistic study, the processes of data collection-analysis-verification-interpretation are ongoing, intervoven processes. Immediately after each interview, the notes were "talked" into a tape recorder, where verbatim comments, observational cues and researcher reactions fleshed out the interview. The taped sessions were then transcribed into typescripts. Interview and observational data were separated from researcher cues, notes and memos. In preparation for subsequent interviews with the respondent, all data were revieved. Questions were developed:

- to fill in the gaps in my understanding, because of incomplete notes, failed memory, illegibly written "clues", etc.,

- to generate thicker description about respondent observations

- to probe any hunches about what lay underneath the observations

- to challenge my own and respondent interpretations of comments both "understood" and "unclear".

During the course of the interviews, I checked frequently with the respondents to be sure that I understood their meanings and had documented them accurately. The final member check occurred after the interviews were completed and the final typescripts were developed. I sent the respondents the decision rules about the deletions made in the final copy of their typescripts as well as the final typescript. Together we agreed on the final form of the content of the typescripts, which appear as mini-case reports within the larger text of the study and from which continued analysis took place. I called each respondent, even though some had already read and returned their typescripts. Several asked for a particular reference or phrase to be removed, but no one felt it necessary to have an additional interview to discuss and finalize the form of the typescripts. The comments I received about them included, "Did you have a tape recorder?" "That's the conversation as I remember it."

The data for the remaining analysis consisted of the edited, approved typescripts, my reflexive journal, and the totality of the experience.

(The tone of the study and my continued interest in the effort to "make sense of it" had to be influenced by two factors which were never reported in the study. I

didn't overlook these factors; but by the end of the study, although I appreciated them, I had already dismissed them to the "purpose" at hand. As I write this paper, however, it is these two factors I remember, rather than the tiredness, confusion, doubt, frustration - although I did swear I'd never wear that winter "interview" coat again! - The factors were: I "overnighted" one night every week for fourteen weeks with an almost total stranger and her husband, who offered me their "home away from home" during the course of the study. Their unfailing interest allowed me to debrief, to sort the experiences and feelings I was having, to think out loud. Their unfailing good company, excellent food, and consistent care and attention to my needs made any question of persistence with the study moot. I cannot imagine spending those off hours alone with all those thoughts in a motel room. How might that have influenced the tone and sense of the effort I do not know. Secondly, the winter was terrific; all of the snow fell between scheduled interview dates, making travel a delight and facilitating the proposed time frame.)

Using the constant comparison method, analysis of the typescripts entailed two major sorts of the data. The first sought to uncover categories within each individual construction, in order to glean a coherent interpretation of the individual as organization. The second major sort was made across the data sets of all respondents, as I worked to gain a sense of the sensemaking strategies in use.

Trustworthiness.

Concepts of reliability and validity are addressed by naturalistic inquiry with the concepts of credibility, dependability and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Table 3 presents a summary of techniques they offer for ascertaining trustworthiness; it also notes those techniques used in this study. The best source for complete information is their volume, Naturalistic Inquiry; as related to the study, see Meloy, 1986, the methodological appendix, pp. 256-277.

Several comments need to be made. That the researcher-respondent interactions be interpreted as credible is due in part to the length, number and spacing of the interviews. A sense of consistency and understanding emerged as our interactions continued. In addition, peer debriefing and hence researcher reflexivity was enhanced by my interaction with the family with whom I stayed, two interested but uninvolved peers and two dissertation committee members, all of whom asked questions to focus, shake-up and assess my thinking. Further, some of the data collected was put aside in order to provide a sense of referential adequacy (Table 3, #4). Within the original study, this portion of the data is provided as a quiz for the readers, to ascertain if their sense of the individual constructions of

reality enables them to pick out which respondent reported which reconstruction of his/her daily routine (Meloy, pp. 227-231). The method of member checking, described earlier, is evident in the mini-case reports; checking my understandings to be sure the respondents' interpretations were accurately documented became second nature by the end of the study. I kept reminding myself "assume you understand nothing".

Table 3
Summary of Techniques for Establishing Trustworthiness

Criterion Area	Technique	Used in this study
Credibility	1. activities in the field which increase the probability of high credibility	-
	a. prolonged engagement	YES
	b. persistent observation	No
	c. triangulation	YES, modified within context of thesis.
	2. peer debriefing	YES
	3. negative case analysis	No
	4. referential adequacy	YES
	5. member checks (in process and terminal)	YES
Transferability	6. thick description	YES
Dependability	7.a. the dependability audit, including the audit trail	YES
Confirmability	7.b. the confirmability audit, including the audit trail	YES
All of the above	8. the reflexive journal	YES

Note. From Naturalistic Inquiry (p.328) by Y.S. Lincoln and E.G. Guba, 1985, Beverly Hills: Sage. Reprinted by permission. Found in Meloy, 1986, p.23.

The Mini-Case Reports.

The final narrative scripts of the researcher-respondent interaction, which include some of my thoughts and reactions to the interaction as it occurred, explicit examples of member checks, etc., provide a rich, descriptive data base. They provide a reader of the study with a sense of "being there"; more importantly, they enable a reader to assess the subsequent interpretations. Further, the audit trail (Halpern, 1984; Schwandt & Halpern, 1988) allows for an independent auditor to track the information in them and in the final analyses back to the original raw data, in order to ascertain whether or not I simply made up eight stories and if the subsequent conclusions (hypotheses in a naturalistic inquiry) are grounded in the data.

PART THREE: FINAL ANALYSES

Once the mini-case reports were finalized and the terminal member check accomplished, a different level of analysis began. Although some analyses are evidenced in the mini-case reports, e.g., thinking "on my feet", responding to non-verbal clues, the final analyses were undertaken by me in interaction with the data, in an attempt to understand/interpret beyond the level of description.

In order to make sense of sensemaking, three "lenses" for focusing the interview interaction were chosen, based largely upon a tacit sense of all I had previously read and heard. The lenses were language (pronoun/tense usage), articulated domain of external organizational focus (the department, school or university) and assertion (statements appearing to be representative of the total of our interaction). Using these lenses, themes of coherence/domains of similarities emerged, focusing the constructions around a particular idea(s). Table 4 below offers a summative theme/domain of the organizations described by each of the eight respondents as interpreted through the three lenses. Table 4 also highlights a summative sensemaking process for each construction, derived mostly from the lens of "assertion." In most instances, the interpretations of construction (a summative statement of "thing") and strategy (a summative statement of "process") appear to be either one and the same or nested one in the other; this statement becomes clearer after reading the mini-case reports (Meloy, 1986, pp.32-170). It also supports Weick's statement, "believing is seeing", i.e., how one "sees"/or makes sense of the work space determines what one sees.

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insert Table 4

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<u>The Individual Constructions of Organization</u>

The organizational construction of Respondent B was a positive, self-fulfilling prophecy. A tightly-knit organization, B described a narrowly focused organization, exemplified by a clear sense of individual purpose. "I" was the major "actor"; the department was the external organization of articulated significance; and the assertions were positive, about preparation for and success within the organization. The organization was purposeful, rewarding and active; expectations were met and efforts were rewarded.

The organizational construction of Respondent C was a frustrating reality compared to the description of what a school of education should be. The language lens was "they", referring to the majority of the faculty members who did not reflect the values of an academic community; the school was the focus of external attention; and the assertions were negative generalizations about the cohort in comparison to an articulated ideal, hence the construction is the opposite of an espoused value.

Table 4
Summative Sensemaking Constructions & Strategies

Respondents	Sensemaking Construction (a "thing")	Sensemaking Strategy (a "process")
B	+ Self-fulfilling prophecy	I'm okay, you're okay.
C	- /C/	Assumptions of Theory X.
D	The informal organization	Networking.
E	Diorama	Feelings.
F	*Accentuate the positive	I'm okay, it's okay.
G	*Valued member of a winning team	I'm okay, we're okay.
H	*A sage	*Contemplates solutions
J	*John Doe	*Concerned with the everyday and the average "man".

(*) indicates terms different from the 1986 study.

Respondent D described an organization similar to a small town, where people and activities are connected at a variety of levels. "We" and an inclusive "you" were explicit language usages; the department, school and university received equal mention; and the assertions depicted the loose couplings of people to each other and to processes, time and space.

Respondent E described an organization grounded in an historical context. In this organization, the present stands in sharp relief against the background of experience. This organization tracked the ascendancy of changing values and bemoaned the status (or lack thereof) of certain groups as a result of the changes. E's organization was bruised by current, external trends.

Like Respondent B, Respondent F had a tightly focused organization, within which roles and goals were clearly articulated and understood. Well-prepared for the tasks at hand, the documented construction of reality emphasized a sense of goodness and well-being; a critical edge was not articulated.

The organization of Respondent G was also similar to that of Respondent B but in a different way; both were positive, self-fulfilling prophecies. G's construction of reality, however, was supported not only by a personal sense of value but also by the other members of the department, who encouraged G's contributions.

The organization of Respondent H is less clear, because I asked the wrong initial question. I asked "what" do you make sense of around here as opposed to "how". Hence, as several "whats" were explicated, a possible construction took on the appearance of hall of wisdom; that is, issues were studied and evaluated here, and answers were posited as reasonable options.

Answering the correct question, Respondent J described an organization centered on issues which reflected an apparent disinterest in the ordinary "man". The focus was external, concerned with the school and university; the assertions were of an organization which exists as "a part of" of larger complex, and whose understandings are "apart from" it.

Based upon the documented and interpreted constructions summarized in Table 4, the following hypothesis was generated.

> Faculty members within a school of education do not interpret experience the same way nor do they have the same experiences to interpret (Meloy, p.240).

The organizational constructions of reality emerging from the researcher-respondent interactions are dissimilar in striking ways. For example, Respondents B and C reported a primary interest in research and related the close connection between their graduate training in research to their current work. Any initial hunches that similar background and training (if not in subject matter, in the methodologies and primacy of research) would foster similar patterns of interpreting current individual work spaces were undone almost immediately. Perhaps the terms 'basic' and 'applied' research should have been considered, that is, the possibility that they were not talking about the same thing. At the time, however, research meant research, although there were subtle distinctions brought out about levels of scholarship and explicit remarks about who and what was supported within the larger organization, which was the school of education. Although the constructions of B and C were explicitly "I" centered (language lens), they were making sense of two distinctly different organizations.

Several of the other organizational constructions were explicitly relational, e.g., G described an organization interdependent among others and D described organizational connections and an organization connected to people, places - e.g., spatial relationships - and things, e.g., basketball. Three other constructions E, H, J, might also be considered relational, but from different bases, such as being seen (E), and being an available advocate (H) or mentor (J). In a sense, home plate for each of the respondents was not in the same place; and indeed several appeared to be established in separate ball parks. Upon reading the mini-case reports, one questions if these individuals were all members of the same school of education. More will be said about this in Part Four of this paper.

Individual Sensemaking Strategies

The summative strategy statements also found in Table 4 above are interpretations of what appeared to be the primary distilling processes for the respondents during the course of our interaction. The statements reflect senses of underlying consistency across the interview sessions. As statements of "processes", they are meant to suggest an "action theme", that is, they refer to the "how" the constructions appeared to have developed. What these summative strategies do not indicate, however, is the variety of explicit and tacit strategies in use during the interactions. Table 5 below describes some of the more obvious strategies which emerged during the course of the study. The following are offered as strategies because they: a) express explicit connectors-in-use, such as History, b) suggest an underlying, consistent- across-interview basis for the interpretation/ presentation of the organizational construction, such as Platforms; c) present potential metaphors for viewing sensemaking, such as Prisms; d) express conscious awareness of sensemaking activity, such as Acknowledged; and/or e) depict some of the explicitly interpretative aspects of communication, such as Empty Spaces. Two of the suggested strategies are actually descriptions of sensemaking processes (Acknowledged; Spontaneous); for example, a Platform could be an acknowledged or implicit strategy.

- - - - - - - -
insert Table 5
- - - - - - - -

Thinking about the total researcher-respondent interaction, including the analysis and development of the interpretations of the individual constructions and strategies, led to the following hypothesis.

> Faculty members in a school of education are alike in asserting their individuality, in part by contrasting themselves to others. Such assertions are critical to their sense of connectedness with the department/school of education/university (Meloy, p.237).

> > Lewin's diagram of the structure of personality does emphasize the centrality of the self in an interesting way...tak[ing] into account: (a) that some responses are more important in the person's organization than others, (b) that the person's view of himself is central to his personality organization, and (c) that responses are integrated into systems...(Lindesmith & Strauss, 1949, p.281).

Table 5 Sensemaking Strategies.

STRATEGY	DESCRIPTION
Platforms.	Attitude as a filter for experiencing; metaphorically conceived of as a loose mesh, e.g., a political platform - a general statement of policy and direction, with room for movement within the framework; a tight mesh, e.g., a diving platform - a structure which may seem to have no affect on the action taken but is the base from which action is taken (pp.200- 203).
e.g., cynicism; seeing/reporting the world thru rose-colored glasses.	
Prisms.	Means of bending a general input (sunlight) into particular and varied streams of output (a rainbow) which creates opportunities for seeing, multiple interpretations (pp.203-204).
e.g., feelings	
Acknowledged. e.g., professed	Conscious reflection; "I am reflective about me."; I walk around to see who is where and what is what (p.204).
Spontaneous. e.g., "Oh, now what does that mean?"	Immediate self-examination of self-in-action, either verbally expressed or tacitly occurring; introspection (pp.204-205).
History.	Tacit and/or explicit relationships between past experiencing and current experiencing/ understanding; past as influencing personal philosophy, values, career selection, patterns of action, perception of choices (pp.205-211).
examples =	
Empty Spaces. e.g., absence gives whole meaning; assumption of compliance;	See Weick (1979) pp.149-152; in this study, pp.211-213, including the experiences of non-experience, non-response and non-existence.
Other.	1) Use of evocative language/metaphor; 2) Discussion with others about that which raises a question - when something is unclear, possible multiple interpretations (p.200). 3) Interpretation of non-verbal behavior, "How without saying, things get said." 4) Awareness/interpretation of the actions of others without similar self-awareness. 5) Creation of images, an external front [genuine vs. contrived sensemaking strategies] (pp.219-221).

The variety of sensemaking strategies clearly illustrates some of the different ways in which the "centrality of the self" is expressed. Most people don't think about how they make sense of things; it is more important to them that they do.

> (The linking, tacit/explicit, of the summative sensemaking strategies and a sense of respondent self-efficacy was not a totally conscious activity at the time these analyses took place. Such a linking does fit with the underlying assumptions guiding the study, including viewing the individual as a whole from which much can be learned, and my asserted predispositions. See Meloy, 1986, p.254-255;257-258.)

During the analyses, additional categories and directions for thinking emerged; some, including the concept of "fit", were pursued in a later paper (see the final page of the annotated bibliography, Meloy, 1987). Others such as niche, resource, and transaction costs, which are terms defined within the population ecology, resource dependence, and markets and hierarchies models of organizations (Aldrich, 1979; Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978; Williamson, 1975), might provide alternative frameworks or analogies for sensemaking at the individual organizational level. An additional hypothesis was developed.

> Macro theories of organization may be appropriate to the "thinking about" individual organizations, i.e., the individual as organization (Meloy, 1986, p.245)

Based on this study, I would argue that within one externally prescribed organization, a school of education, there exists a population of organizations, namely, those of each of the organizational participants.

PART FOUR: IMPLICATIONS AND CONSIDERATIONS

In the remainder of this paper, implications and/or directions for future practice and thinking in the areas of educational administration, organizational culture, methodology and sensemaking will be discussed.

Educational Administration.

In spite of the qualities most human beings share, such as an ability to make sense of things, we can no longer assume that our sensemaking strategies and constructions of organizational reality are similar enough to warrant ignoring the common sense dictum that people are different (Meloy, 1986, pp.236-238;240-243). We use our sensemaking strategies to reduce equivocality; the biggest threat inherent in some of our strategies is the tendency to develop scripts and stereotypes, which affirm rather than disconfirm our sense of reality. "We tend to be more interested in developing and confirming our cognitive schemas than in testing them....we do not give ourselves much of an opportunity to be wrong" (Downey & Brief, in Sims & Gioia,1986, p. 177) Stated differently: "Since hypotheses confirming information is generally regarded as more 'informative'...it is not surprising that people have been found to search for it" (Feldman, in Sims & Gioia, 1986, p.279).

Within schools of education, people tend to be treated alike; singular, specified behaviors and activities are rewarded; and reorganization - of departments, roles and responsibilities, and value orientation - is undertaken with little regard for organizational history and the variety of persons whose talents and understandings comprise the organization. Change doesn't occur because we want it to; there are certain preconditions which enable/limit an individual's participation in the process (Kanter, 1983). Getting at those preconditions is, in a sense, "making the familiar strange", a valuable suggestion to administrators who believe they are working with and for the people they lead. How can this be done? Sensemaking studies such as this one, and others using the technique of cognitive mapping (see annotated bibliography: Lotto & Murphy, 1988; Quaglia, 1988; Weick & Bougon, in Sims & Gioia, 1986), are two ways. Still other means can be suggested:

- Use the technique of Organizational Self Reflection (OSR), (Finney & Mitroff, in Sims & Gioia,1986, pp.322-334).
- Ascertain the tacit beliefs and assumptions, which are the foundations of organizational culture (Schein, 1985, pp.85-147).
- Examine the current stereotypes and taken-for-granted interpretations of organizational participants and activities (Feldman, in Sims & Gioia, 1986).

- Institutionalize the role of 'devils' advocate' (Feldman, p. 282); select a respected individual from within the organization who can generate/ uncover/solicit the alternatives to your own hypotheses.

- Acknowledge the role of affect in your seeing; "Affect influences on managerial judgments are subtle, insidious and pervasive" (Park, Sims & Motowildo, in Sims & Gioia, p. 231).

- Question the assumptions of socialization and shared meanings by attending to the surprises expressed by new faculty members (Louis, 1980; Quaglia, 1988); how do they challenge what you "know"?

- Attend to the expression of <u>non</u>-surprise by faculty members - "It doesn't surprise me that..." Ask why not? What does that tell you?

- Consider schools of education as a particular type of organization wherein the "products" (graduating students, additions to the knowledge base, the teaching-learning process) are of people who do <u>not</u> believe they are interchangeable, generic parts of the process (Meloy, 1986, pp. 238-240).

More importantly is the "why" this should be done.

> Hart summarizes his position about criticizing the cause maps of other people this way: "Perhaps the most important application...would be to provide the user with a list of concepts which he himself distinguished but which others did not, and vice versa. Similarly, one could provide the user with a list of assertions made by others which don't agree with those that he himself would make. The purpose of such an application would be to prevent the sort of talking at cross-purposes that often takes place at political negotiating sessions (Weick & Bougon, in Sims & Gioia, 1986, p. 131).

The continuously growing interest in organizations which are ethical, healthy and excellent suggests that the fundamental humanness of organizations and thus their inherent complexity and possibility is emerging a primary focal point for greater understanding. As McGregor (1960) wrote to top management about their role in developing the talent of their employees:

> Managers who have undertaken to manage by integration and self-control report that the strategy is time-consuming. It is far quicker to hand a subordinate a position description and to inform him of his objectives for the coming period. If, however, the strategy is perceived as a way of managing which requires less policing of subordinates and which is accompanied by growth in managerial competence, the expenditure of time will be accepted as natural.
>
> This approach does not tack a new set of duties on top of the existing managerial load. It is, rather, a different way of fulfilling existing responsibilities - of "running the job." I have yet to meet a manager who has made effective use of this managerial strategy who is critical of the time required. Several have said, "If this isn't the primary job of the manager, what is?" (p. 76).

Organizational Culture.

The organizational culture approach to organizing portrays organizations as systems of shared meanings: "In this view, organization members act in a coordinated fashion as a result of sharing a common set of meanings or interpretations of their joint experience" (Donnellon, Gray, & Bougon, 1986). Explicit evidence of joint experiencing across respondents was limited in this study. Weick's (1979) statement: "Partners in a collective structure share space, time and energy but they need not share missions, aspirations or intentions " seems to hold (p.91). It may be that the values are essentially tacit to begin with, that is, "of" the persons who choose the professorate as their calling, or it may be that commonalities are harder to articulate than the differences (Meloy, 1986, p.243). In The Academic Life, Burton Clark (1988) found:

> When academics are asked about common values of their profession, we can discern some broad areas to which they turn, even if they are unsure about how far their conceptions extend to embrace others (p.129).

And later:

> [they] may all, in common, voice certain phrases, but the meanings of the symbols become different as they are reinterpreted and specified to make sense in varied settings (p.141).

Finally:

> We did note the widespread use of a vocabulary of ultimate values that suggests some symbolic sharing (p.144).

Two shared meanings/acknowledged values appeared across the constructions of organizational reality in this study.

- Each respondent valued his/her autonomy and the freedom to structure time.

- Each described research as the component of the triumvirate (teaching, research, service) which was encouraged, expected and evaluated (Meloy, 1986, p.214).

Both of these shared understandings are also found in Clark's (1988) work. Additionally, one local shared understanding uncovered in my study was the topic of sports. Given the extent and context of the interview interactions, however, the explication of shared meaning appears to be neither an explicit automatic sensemaking strategy nor an impetus to action in some "organizations". For unlike Clark, who states near the conclusion of his text that: "the vast majority want to do some research, and publish a little, even if teaching is their first love" (p.263), I found little evidence of this sentiment in the sensemaking study. Certainly the current status of the profession, where prestige is coupled with particular universities and prolific research output (Clark, 1988), would make "the vast majority" of professors at other institutions (who are, I suspect, the vast majority) appear foolish if they <u>did not</u> assert that they "wanted" to "do some research and publish a little". The methodological approaches of the two studies are distinctly different and, I believe, account for the difference in information collected. It is evident, then, that continued efforts to explicate the concepts of organizational culture (Kuh & Whitt, 1988) and it's relationship to sensemaking are needed.

<u>Methodology</u>.

Van Maanen (1979), writing about "The Fact of Fiction in Organizational Ethnography", provided several caveats about verbal data in a subsection entitled, 'Lies, Ignorance, and (Taken-for-Granted) Assumptions':

> a. A central postulate...is that people lie about the things that matter most to them.
> b. The respondents themselves may be wrong or misled about what they report.
> c. Respondents may be unaware of certain aspects underlying many of their own activities (pp.544-546).

Different understandings of self-report are found in a discussion of oral history. Burgess (1886-1966), who "has been called the first young sociologist" (Bennett, 1981, p.156) and "the guide and interpreter of much of [Clifford] Shaw's work" stated:

> The truth of the materials in the document...is not so much the reliability of the events as portrayed, but the validity of the attitudes of the writer of the document. Shaw (1895-1957) elaborates: "It is in the personal document that...feelings,...fears and worries,...ideals and philosophy of life, antagonisms and mental conflicts, prejudices and rationalizations [are revealed]" (JR4) (in Bennett, p.185).

Further, in a section entitled 'Life History Sandwiches', Bennett discusses Shaw's contributions to sociology and the study of delinquency:

> According to Shaw, 'own story' 'reveals useful information' on the point of view of the delinquent, the social and cultural situation to which the delinquent is responsive, and the sequence of past experiences and situations...(p.185).

If the word "delinquent" becomes respondent, the similarity between one's own story and the content of the individual constructions of reality is evident, particularly on points one and two in the quote immediately above. The question remains, however, how does an interpretative study attempt to address Van Maanan's concerns? The concepts of interpretation, explanation and understanding become involved.

> Natural scientists explain phenomena by formulating [causal] relationships among types or classes of events....The explanations which people give of their own acts are not of this kind. A person's rationalizations* enable others to project themselves into his point of view....They gain insight into his behavior even though they cannot explain it in terms of causal sequences. Thus, understanding treats persons as unique individuals, whereas scientific explanation deals with them only as members of logical classes (Lindesmith & Strauss, 1949, pp. 316-317)

*a genuine rationalization is a formulation which the individual himself believes to the true even though it may be labeled as

self-deception by outside observers...it is usually taken to mean giving the socially acceptable but 'phony' reasons for ones acts. (L & S, pp.306-308).

In interacting with and responding to people as unique individuals and respecting their emerging constructions of reality, certain aspects of critical judgment are held in abeyance. Notions of like/dislike, agree/disagree, right/wrong are out of place within the context of an inquiry based on the assumption that a major purpose of the inquirer is to place herself - and through thick description, others - in the shoes of the respondents(s). However, listening and observing critically for nuances, something "between the lines" and/or unacknowledged or "hidden" agendas is a part of the process. The human being is the research instrument of choice precisely because of the ability to use all of the senses, the mind and the 'gut'. Hence, not only is the researcher pursuing the process of "being there" by documenting the reality of the interaction, s/he is also - in the reflexive journal, through peer debriefing and with his own sensemaking strategies - examining critically/interpreting what "being there" means, beyond or with-out the context.

As such, researchers are themselves sensemakers; concepts such as motives, attribution, impression management, etc., are not only notable in respondents. Ball (1989) spoke of the explicit reflexivity a qualitative researcher needs, i.e., an ability to be aware of and examine the interactive research processes; others, including Peshkin (1988) assert acknowledging predispositions prior to entering the context as a means of explicating the possible 'biases' of the study. Lincoln & Guba (1985) and others have suggested the team approach to inquiry as a practical means of shaking loose and making visible the implicit structures and interpretations imposed on the setting by the researcher.

Naturalistic inquiry is one approach to inquiry which espouses the fundamental belief in the value of the participants' points of view. Van Maanen's caveats were acknowledged. However:

> ...data generated by 'lies' and/or 'ignorance' shape the organization as the individual constructs it; they are a part of, not apart from, the organization as it is figured out. The underlying assumption of the caveats is their reference to qualitative analyses from which "the typical version of a given social world" is derived. For the purposes of this study, that 'given social world' is a singular unit, constructed by the individual respondent...(Meloy, 1986, p.21).

As constructors of reality within the processes of social interaction, this simply means consideration of the assumptions

of inquiry extends, as Morgan (1983) aptly stated in a book title, "beyond method." The integrity of assumptions of the inquiry to all which follows is particularly vital when "Social cognition is frequently invisible to those under its influence" (Finney & Mitroff, in Sims & Gioia, p.312). I assume they are referring to researchers as well.

In some ways, this particular study is an interpretation of the ideas documented in Naturalistic Inquiry. By considering the individual as the organization, that is, as the whole of the context to be explored, the parameters of the inquiry - thesis, methodology and write-up - had to be considered for each respondent, as if eight separate inquiries were being undertaken. The school of education was not the focus/context. Too often, physical structures organize the limits of a potential data base and/or context when it is phenomena permeating those walls which are tacitly or explicitly being considered. This is particularly notable in the differences between The Academic Life, Clark's (1988) study of the professoriate and the sensemaking study. For each voice in Clark's study "representing" a particular type of university or rank of professor, were the voices of "my" respondents living in one school of education at one type of university. Clark notes many people do not "fit" the structure of the institution where they live (p.231), never understanding that the structure is less a category of meaning than it is a socially prescribed and relative frame of reference. Reconsider the mini-case reports in the original study in light of Bennett's (1981) comments on the importance of a such a story:

> She was not typical, but her story became relevant. She was not representative; autobiographical material is not good at determining or representing typicality anyway. [She] was a representative; she spoke for others about their common experiences,... (p.231).

As a member of my dissertation committee said at the conclusion of my defense, "I know you did the study here. I know every one of those people." The point is, I did not. And the university of research origin, i.e., my home base, was a different "type" than the one wherein I conducted my research, using Clark's (1988) categories of institution type (see Clark, 1988, pp. 279-287). Departments, disciplines, university type were not noted anywhere in study and are not totally apparent through deduction. An asset of naturalistic inquiry is that it requires continuous and conscious information processing, that is, reflection on a number of levels about the data; through it, categories essential to understanding can emerge, as well as new understandings themselves (Meloy, paper in progress).

Sensemaking.

The 1988 contribution to the 1986 study "Organizational Sensemaking: A Study from the Inside Out" has involved further reading in and thinking about the literatures of organizational theory, semiotics, ethnography, alternative research paradigms, psychology, social psychology, philosophy and gender issues. In the following pages, I briefly describe some of the material. A few of the texts are valuable resources; others are simply representative of their fields. I hope the brief commentary provided will enable you to make decisions about their utility for you.

NOTE: An asterisk * after some of the sources mentioned below indicates that the full citation can be found in the main bibliography of the paper. A complete reference is given for all texts mentioned for the first time.

Organizational Theory.

Empirical work. In their chapter of The Thinking Organization entitled "Organizations as Cognitive Maps", Weick & Bougon (1986*) identify the few sources of empirical work which use the strategy of cognitive mapping. The chapter also includes background information on mapping, methods for gathering cause maps, findings from cause map research, and implications. The utility of mapping is similar to an exercise in organizational self-reflection or the explication of culture, in which the unknown or unacknowledged is made clear (see pages 20-21, this paper).

Since The Thinking Organization was written, at least two studies in education have been undertaken on sensemaking - Lotto & Murphy (1988) and Quaglia (1988*). Both were presented at the 1988 AERA conference in New Orleans. The Lotto & Murphy paper, entitled "Making Sense of Schools as Organizations: Cognition and Sensemaking in Schools" made use of the cognitive mapping technique in a study of a single elementary school.

> The significance of this study is threefold. First, it builds on and extends our knowledge of individual sensemaking in organizations. Second, it contributes to the increasing sophistication with which cause map data are collected, aggregated, and interpreted. Third, it applies the notion of individual cognition in a new organizational context, the school (p.3).

A second study, entitled "An Analysis of the Sensemaking Process of Beginning Teachers with Implications for the Principal" did not use the cognitive mapping technique. Rather, Quaglia (1988*) specified "variable clusters" around 'beginning teacher expectations', 'the sensemaking process of beginning teachers', and the 'principal's activities that impact sensemaking for the beginning teacher'.

Sources.

Lotto & Murphy, 1988. Making Sense of Schools as Organizations: Cognition and Sensemaking in Schools. AERA paper, New Orleans.

Quaglia, 1988. An Analysis of the Sensemaking Process of Beginning Teachers with Implications for the Principal. AERA paper, New Orleans.

Related Reading. Don't forget to check out the Monographs in Organizational Behavior and Industrial Relations, Vol. 1, edited by Pondy, Frost, Morgan and Dandridge. Organizational symbolism is the theme of this edited text. Of particular interest to sensemaking are Louis' chapter on "Organizations as Culture-Bearing Milieux", in which she discusses both the sociological and psychological contexts of organizations; Huff's "A Rhetorical Examination of Strategic Change"; all of Part V, entitled, "Making Sense of Organizational Symbols", (as much for the how as for the what); and Walter's chapter on "Psyche and Symbol".

Mitroff's (1983) Stakeholders of the Organizational Mind was published before the sensemaking study (Meloy, 1986*) was undertaken. This book is useful in peeling back the layers of the "organization" not only in terms of the external stakeholders but also in terms of :

> ...the internal stakeholders - those that constitute the innermost core of the individual's psyche. The major thesis of this book is that there is a constant interaction, overlap, and interplay between these two broad classes of stakeholders, internal and external to the individual, the organization, the institution, and the state (p.5).

The book is an interesting combination of ideas; within it mingle notions of organizational stories, myths, rituals, heroes and villains, symbols, the ego and the spirit.

Two articles in Volume 31 of the Administrative Science Quarterly are examples of the directions in which the study of sensemaking can lead. The first, by Donnellon, Gray, and Bougon, was cited in the main bibliography, "Communication, Meaning, and Organized Action". The second, by Staw, Bell, and Clausen, is entitled, "The Dispositional Approach to Job Attitudes: A Lifetime Longitudinal Test". Although the implications from the title do not appear hopeful for certain modes of inquiry, there remains a connection between this approach to understanding and the thesis "the individual as the organization":

> The objective features of tasks are seldom concrete enough to dictate a positive or negative response, and as a consequence, individuals may generally interpret the work environment in ways that are consistent with their own psychological states (p.74).

Sources.

Administrative Science Quarterly, 31, (1986), pp.43-75 for the above two articles:
Donnellon, A., Gray, B., & Bougon M. Communication, meaning, and organized action.
Staw, B., Bell, N., & Clausen, J. The dispositional approach to job attitudes: A lifetime longitudinal test.

Mitroff, I.I. (1983). Stakeholders of the organizational mind. San Francisco: Jossey Bass.

Pondy, L.R., Frost, P.J., Morgan, G., & Dandridge, T.C. (Eds.), (1983). Organizational symbolism. Greenwich, CT: Jai Press Inc. Monographs in Organizational Behavior & Industrial Relations, Volume 1.

Ethnography.

Agar (1986) wrote, in Speaking of Ethnography, "I hope the ethnographic language proposed here will contribute to and encourage others in reflecting on and articulating the analytic part of the enthnographic research style." The entire, short volume is a useful text, wherein the concept of ethnographic sensemaking is made explicit. The text offers a systematic understanding for the ethnographic experience.

In the discussion of "breakdowns, coherence and resolution" (Chpt. 2, Ethnographic Understanding, pp. 20-39), you'll find similarities to Louis (1980*) as well as references to the topic of cognitive schemas and scripts [to be discussed below]. How understanding is derived goes beyond the conception of ethnography as pure description:

> Ethnography is not just a process of resolving schemas. If it were, I doubt many of us would do it. Human understanding works in mysterious ways, and fieldwork experiences have meanings that go far beyond one's "official" researcher role. But part of what ethnographers do is detached, analytic, and systematic, and it is this part that is most at stake when they draw back from the personal nature of the experience and concern themselves with a public presentation of a coherent view of a "humanscape" that is new to the eyes of the reader. That is what an ethnographic language is for. (p. 58)

Although she does not use the "language" proposed by Agar, Page (1988) details many of the understandings - and misunderstandings - which arose from her first attempt at ethnographic research. Examples of sensemaking strategies are explicit, as well as how they were interpreted in context.

Sources.

Agar, M.H. (1987). Speaking of ethnography (2nd printing). Beverly Hills: Sage. Qualitative Research Methods Series, 2.

Page, H.E. (1988). Dialogic principles of interactive learning in the ethnographic relationship. Journal of Anthropological Research, 44, (2), 163-181.

Alternative Paradigms.

The experience of using an alternative approach to inquiry is the topic of several chapters in a significant resource book, Human Inquiry: A Sourcebook of New Paradigm Research, edited by Reason and Rowan, (1981). "Making Sense as a Personal Process" by Marshall and "One researcher's self-questioning" by Rosen each provide an example of a researcher's thinking through and awareness about the process of inquiry. Many other chapters may be helpful for topics other than sensemaking, such as Chapter 21, wherein the editors discuss the concept of validity in new paradigm research.

Source.

Reason, P., & Rowan, J. (Eds.), (1981). Human inquiry: A sourcebook of new paradigm research. Chichester: John Wiley & Sons.

Psychology.

Given the nature of the interpretations formulated in the sensemaking study, connections to psychology were explicit. Concepts of schemas and scripts are addressed in The Thinking Organization, Sims & Gioia, 1986 and elsewhere (see Ashforth & Fried below). But the "flavor" of the mini-case reports sent me in two other directions. The first area was the literature on the concept of "cognitive styles" or "controls". Other topics scanned were sources on self concept, personality, identity development, self efficacy, etc. The Lindesmith & Strauss (1949•) volume was a pleasant reference for the latter topics.

Cognitive Styles. The term 'cognitive styles' "refers to the characteristic ways in which individuals conceptually organize the environment" (Goldstein & Blackman, 1979. p.2). The concept emerged within the "New Look movement", a group of psychologists who turned their attention to the person as perceiver, focussing on the relationship between personality and perception (Witkin & Goodenough, 1978). Additionally, cognitive styles are similar to other concepts, such as "silent

organization", "cognitive maps" and "schemata" (G & B, p.3); study of the construct was undertaken in order "to best predict information-processing behavior" (G & B, p. 214). For the purposes of sensemaking as pursued by means of a naturalistic inquiry, however, the importance of the concept of cognitive style is not its predictive ability, but its utility as a possible lens for understanding the individual constructions of organization.

Several chapters in a more recent volume, Moderators of Competence, discuss cognitive styles. Brodzinsky (1985) indicates that there are at least "19 separate approaches to the study of cognitive styles. Of these, only five - field dependence-independence, reflection-impulsivity, styles of conceptualization, breadth of categorization and locus of control - have received serious attention" (p.150). When the mini-case reports are reviewed with one or more of these approaches in mind, their usefulness as possible lenses for understanding is apparent, as is perhaps the usefulness of the data in providing additional insight into the styles themselves.

Sources.

Ashforth, B., & Fried, Y. (1988). The mindlessness of organizational behaviors. Human Relations, 41 (4), 305-329.

Brodzinsky, D.M. (1985). On the relationship between cognitive styles and cognitive structures. In E.D. Neimark, R. DeLisi, & J.L. Newman (Eds.), Moderators of competence (pp.147-174). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Goldstein, K.M., & Blackman, S. (1978). Cognitive style: Five approaches and relevant research. NY: John Wiley & Sons.

Scott, W.A., Osgood, D.W., & Peterson, C. (1979). Cognitive structure: Theory and measurement of individual differences. Washington, D.C.: V.H. Winston & Sons.

Witkin, H.A., & Goodenough, D.R. (1981). Cognitive styles; Essence and origins. NY: International Universities Press, Inc.

Finally, a "fun" book entitled Workshops in Cognitive Processes with chapter titles such as "Do you use your own script when you read a story?", "How does emotion affect our logic?" and "Do you cross bridges before you come to them?" This quick read might be useful in provoking your own thinking about sensemaking. Might it suggest possible data collection activities as well? Or possible "sensitivity" exercises for qualitative researchers?

Source.

Bennett, A., Hausfeld, S., Reeve, R.A., & Smith, J. (1978, 1981). Workshops in cognitive processes (2nd ed.). London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Social psychology.

In the area of social psychology, I reviewed Shaw & Costanzo's (1982*) Theories of Social Psychology, 2nd edition. Section 4 of this text presents the cognitive orientation of social psychology; Section 5 presents the role-theory orientation. In The Thinking Organization, Chatman, Bell, and Staw have a chapter entitled, "The Managed Thought: The Role of Self-Justification and Impression Management in Organizational Settings". Impression management is discussed in section 5 of the Shaw & Costanzo volume. Weick's (1979*) Social Psychology of Organizing pulls together other connections. Others await.

ETC.

For those interested in a more philosophical approach to conceptualizing the individual as organization, see:

Rorty, A.O. (Ed.), (1976). The identities of persons. Berkeley: U. of California Press.

The literary postscript by the editor "Characters, Persons, Selves, Individuals" makes interesting reading for a broader audience as well.

Finally, I am in the process of reading three books related to the study at the broadest levels and to my own personal interests. These are Hunter & Ainlay's edited volume devoted to Peter L. Berger and interpretive sociology; Sampson's book, in which he discusses the 'limited' and 'creative' views of the mind and in which he says "The kinds of linguistic research whose validity I am calling into question... sees Man as something much less than the creative animal I take him to be" and further:

> To summarize the book in a sentence, I am to show that the contents of our speech and writing -...- are not born with us but made by us. It is not only by a figure of speech that we are entitled to describe ourselves as making sense (p. 19).

The third is Thomason's book about Alfred Schutz, which is demanding a second reading; Schutz is cited frequently by many of the authors mentioned throughout the paper. Important ideas are grounded in his work. Although I understand he is considered to be in the "positivist" camp, I am nonetheless interested in thinking him through. And lest you think I am keeping a major secret from you, you will note by the titles of each of these volumes that I was fortunate indeed!

Sources.

Hunter, J.D., & Ainlay, S.C. (Eds.),(1986). Making sense of modern times. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Sampson, G. (1980). Making sense. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Thomason, B.C. (1982). Making sense of reification. London: The MacMillan Press.

If you ever doubted the efficacy of a clear title, doubt no more! (You will be less successful under "sensemaking", but perhaps that will change soon.)
In conclusion, I would be most appreciative of the titles to any good reads, other connections, comments, etc., which you are able to share with me. Please send to: Judy Meloy, P.O. Box 187, Poultney,VT. 05764. Thank you.

P.S. I almost forgot. I did an analysis of the mini-case reports by gender for the 1987 Conference for Women in Higher Education in Orlando, Florida. The categories for understanding were generated prior to going to the literature to see what I might find; concepts explicated by Gilligan (1982) and categories for sorting data used by Lyons (1985) paralleled the categories which emerged from the analysis. I am currently revising that paper.

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